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Institute of Psychology

Is diversity good or bad for teams?

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Teams are the most common form of organisational collaboration (Salas et al., 2008)



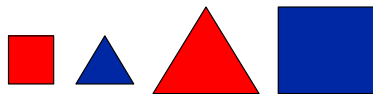


Diversity: Differences on any attribute that may lead to perceiving someone as „different“

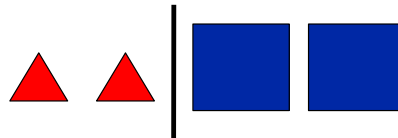
- “Diversity refers to differences between individuals on any attribute that may lead to the perception that another person is different from self” (van Knippenberg, De Dreu, & Homan, 2004, p. 1011).
- Diversity becomes more important as more organisations employ more heterogeneous individuals, e. g.:
 - Demographic change (age)
 - International mobility (ethnicity)
 - Gender equality



Looking at several differences simultaneously: Diversity Faultlines

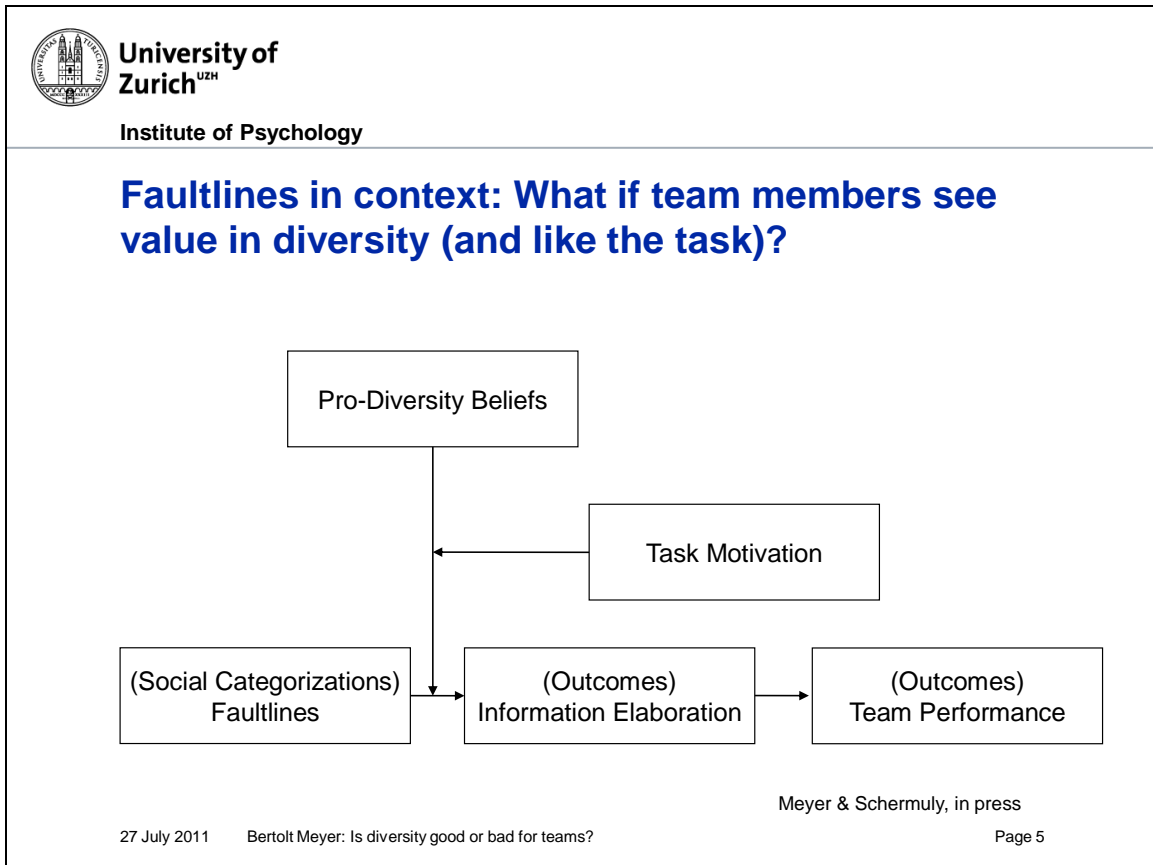


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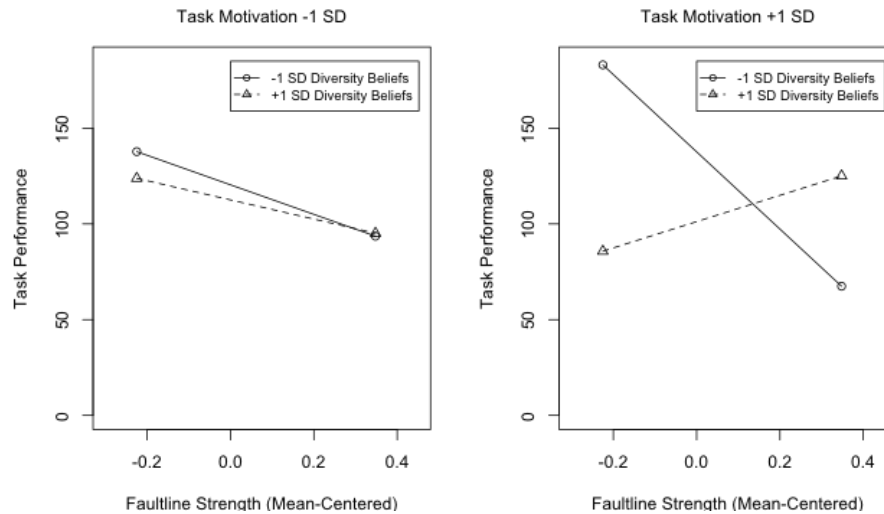
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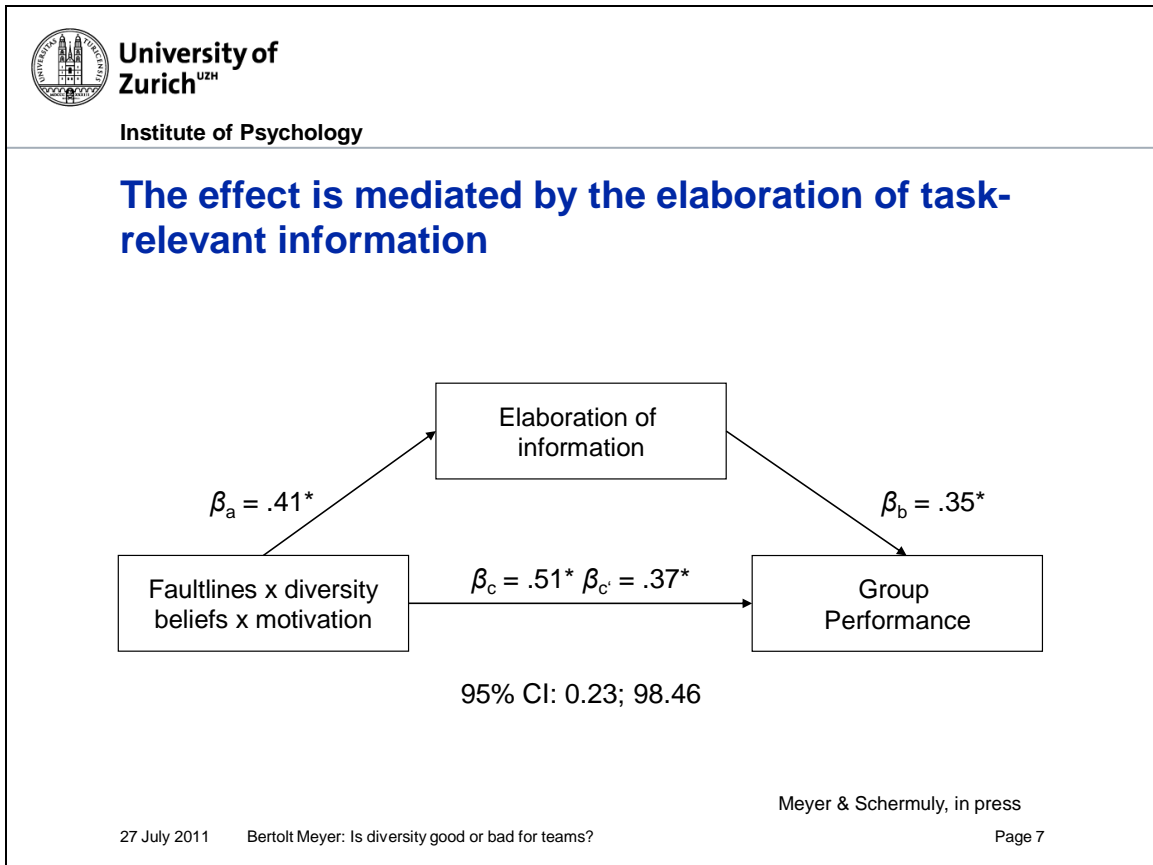
- If we only look at one attribute at a time, these two teams have the same level of diversity
- These two teams differ in their diversity faultline strength: 0.33 vs. 1.00
- Faultlines are associated with decreased satisfaction and performance (Thatcher & Patel, in press).
- Can we overcome the negative effects of faultlines?





Results: Faultlines have a positive effect if team members see value in diversity (and like the task)



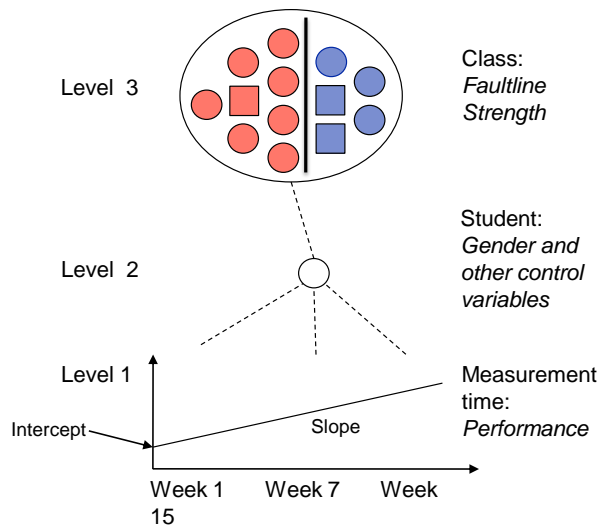




Faultlines over time: Can stronger faultlines lead to more positive outcomes over time than weaker ones?

- Diversity faultlines could lead to problematic effects at the beginning, but could foster team learning over time (e.g., Brodbek & Greitemeyer, 2000)
- Test of this assumption in 84 diverse military training groups ($N = 1133$, 13.1 trainees per group) where learning was measured over time
- Sample was diverse with regard to race (32 Asian, 578 Black, 114 Hispanic, 13 Native American, 345 White), gender (721 male, 368 female), and other attributes
- Focal area of training: Behavioral change associated with challenging interactions brought about by group diversity
- Assessments of students' behaviors associated with course objectives: Ratings (0-100) at three equally spaced time points by three raters (the two trainers and one outside assessor) on five scales
- Faultline strength F_{au} (Thatcher, Jehn, & Zanutto, 2003) computed over available social categories

A three-level growth model of the impact of faultlines on training performance over time



- Hypothesis: Strong faultlines are associated with a lower intercept and a higher slope in test performance than weak faultlines
- ICC(1) of test scores in classes = .09, $p < 0.001$, ICC(2) = 0.79: Multilevel modeling warranted

van Driel, Meyer, & McDonald, 2011

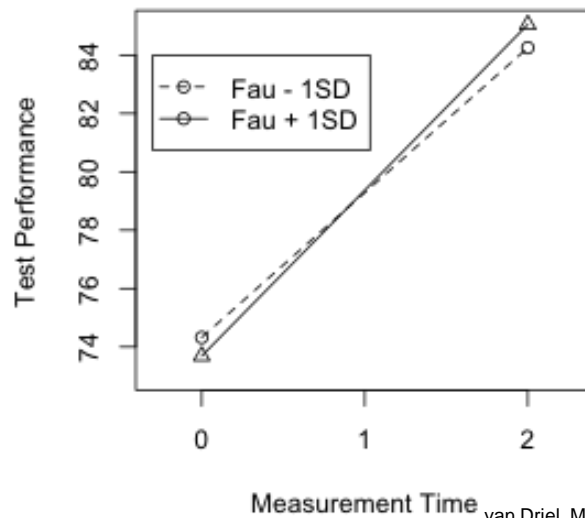
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Random Coefficient Growth Modeling in R (Bliese, 2009) reveals the proposed effect



van Driel, Meyer, & McDonald, 2011

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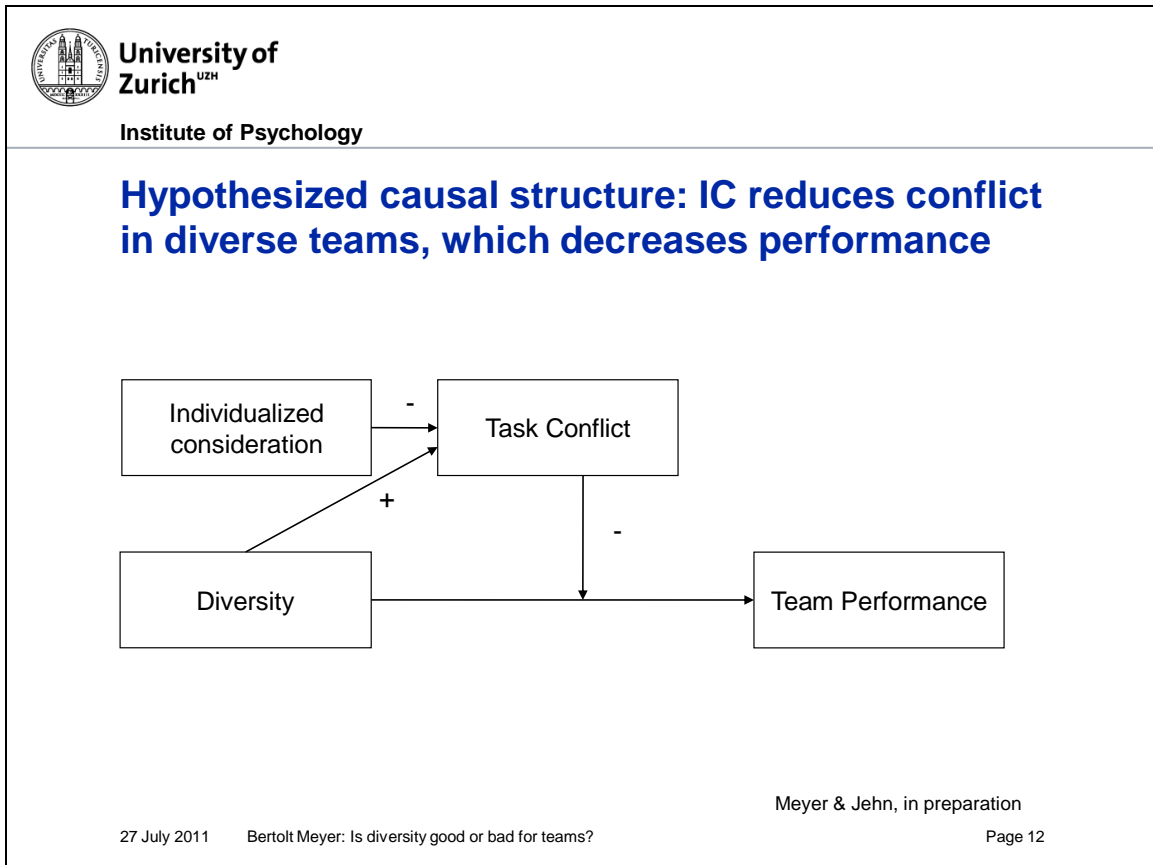
Bertolt Meyer: Is diversity good or bad for teams?

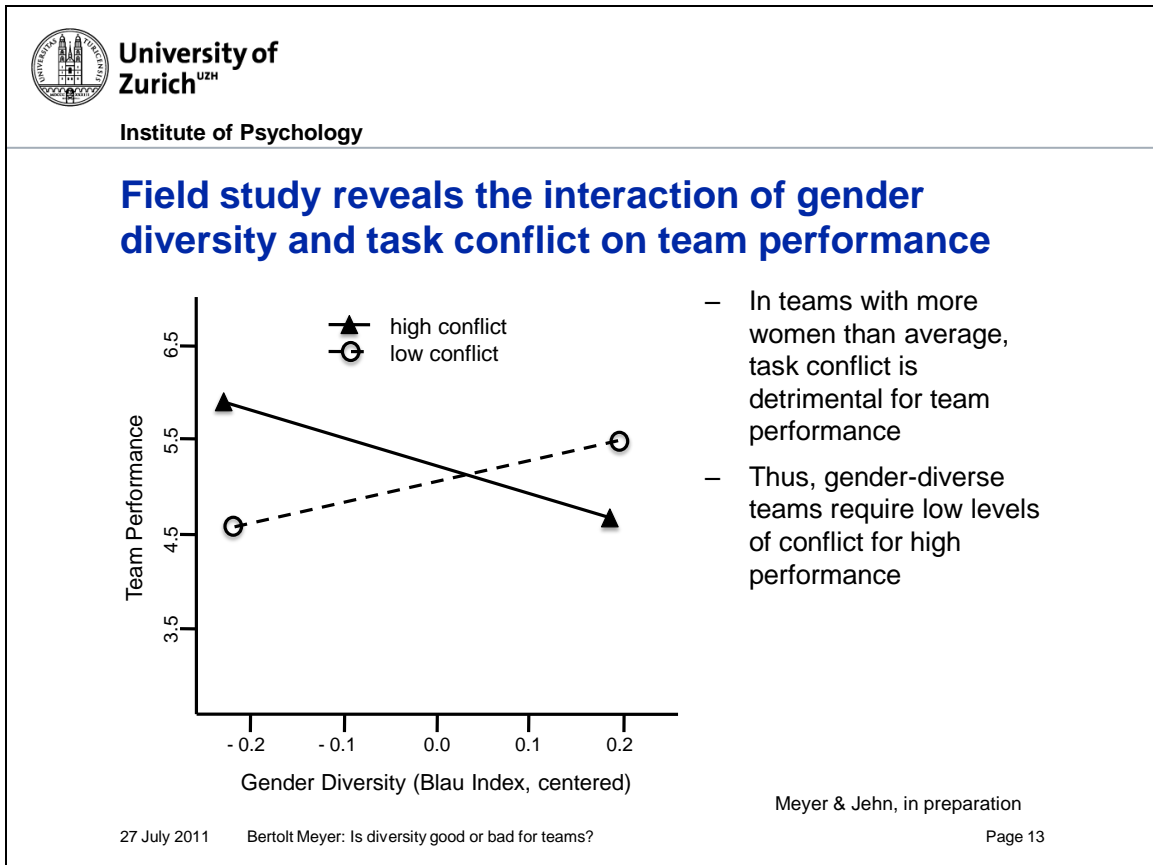
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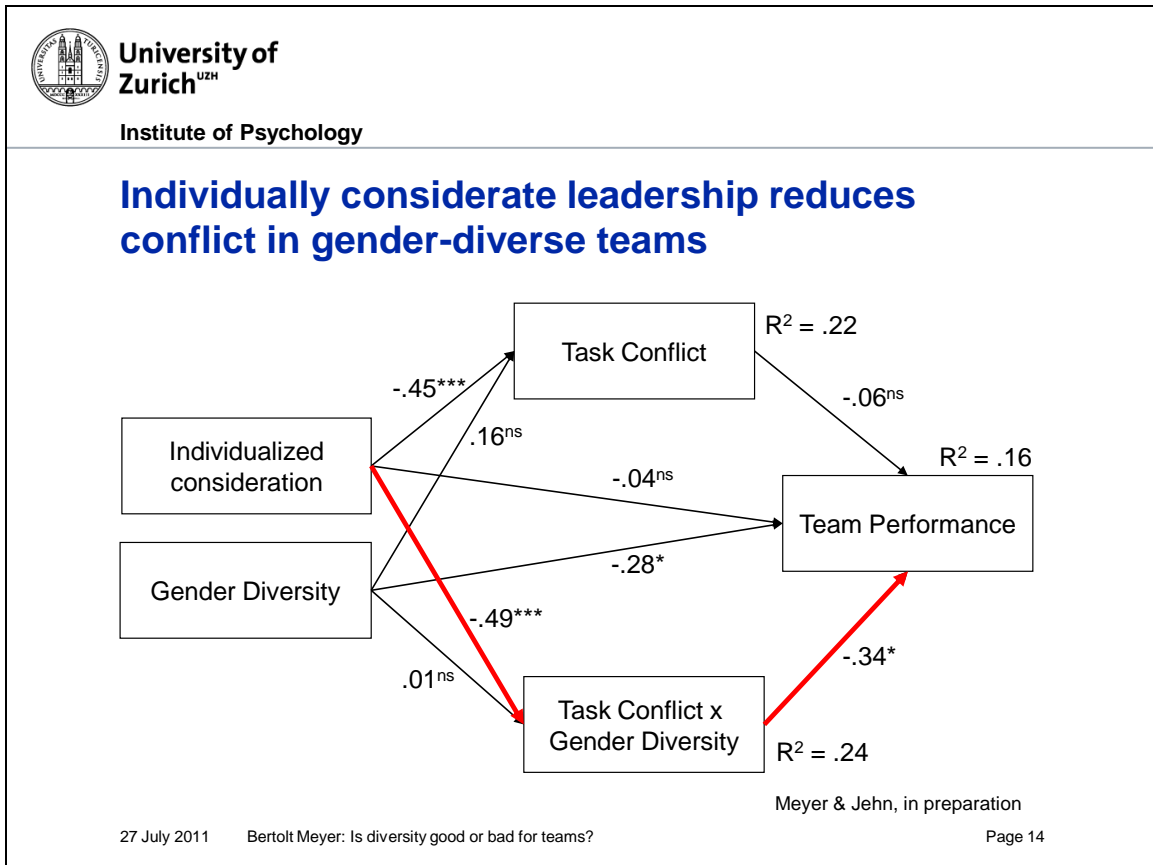


Can leadership lead to the positive effects of group diversity?

- Transformational leadership: A leadership style that transforms followers' attitudes and values, thereby creating sustainable change among team members (Bass, 1998)
- One facet of transformational leadership: Individualized consideration: attending to followers needs
 - "pivotal concept" (Avolio & Bass, 1995, p. 201) in transformational leadership
 - Individual consideration is a person-focused behaviour (Burke et al., 2006)
- Individually considerate leadership could help prevent conflicts in diverse teams and thus enhance team performance









Conclusion: Is diversity good or bad for groups? It depends.

- The effect of group diversity on team and individual outcomes depends on group members' perceptions and on group processes:
 - If group members see value in diversity and are motivated for the task at hand, salient diversity (faultlines) is beneficial for team performance (Study 1)
 - Salient team diversity (faultlines) can have negative short-term effects but positive long-term effects (Study 2)
 - Individualized considerate leadership can help reduce conflict in (gender-) diverse teams and therefore contribute to team performance (Study 3)
- Further research should shed more light on antecedents and consequences of diversity beliefs and diversity perceptions



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Outlook: Antecedents of diversity beliefs; stereotypes & status; diversity & leadership

- Study of the antecedents of diversity beliefs in school children with Social Network Analysis (analysis completed)
- Study on the interaction of team diversity, diversity beliefs, task stereotypicality, and status (paper submitted)
- Leadership & Trust: Which observable micro-level leadership behaviors (speech & body language) bring about the positive effects of leadership?





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Thank you very much for your attention!
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